

# Indiana House of Representatives

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## News and Information

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*Media Office*

*Democratic Caucus*

*John Schorg, Director*

*Statehouse, Room 157*

*Indianapolis, Indiana 46204*

*1-800-382-9842 or 1-317-232-9621*

*Fax Number: 1-317-232-9792*

### SMITH URGES GARY RESIDENTS TO FIGHT THE CLOSURE OF CITY'S BMV BRANCH

Indianapolis—State Rep. Vernon G. Smith (D-Gary) said Gary residents need to join him in the fight to keep the city's only BMV branch open.

Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicle (BMV) Commissioner Joel Silverman has proposed closing the office located at 1350 Broadway in the Midtown Center.

"Silverman said Gary was the only location in Lake County, besides Lowell, where he could break the lease," said Dr. Smith. "My question is how much more time is on the BMV building leases in the smaller communities in Lake County? Wouldn't it make more sense to break one of those leases and not create such a great inconvenience for so many people who live in one of Indiana's largest cities?"

Gary is the largest of the 24 branches across Indiana that Silverman recommended be closed. Chesterton is also on that list. Silverman said the BMV recently lost the lease for the Lowell office and he recommended it not be reopened.

The announcement of the proposed closings came at the same time Silverman shut nine other branches, but gave a reprieve to the Hope, Indiana BMV office, which is located in Senate Pro Tempore Robert Garton's district.

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"It is outrageous to close a busy branch like the one in Gary, while leaving open one of the least busy branches located in the small town of Hope," said Dr. Smith. "Commissioner Silverman is catering to the most powerful Republican state senator while taking away an important service to the fifth largest city in Indiana. This is a partisan travesty. Gov. Daniels said he wants to reach out to the minority community, then he allows his appointee to do something like this. It angers me and should anger everyone. "

Ninety percent of Gary's population consists of minorities.

State law requires the BMV to conduct a public hearing in each of the counties where a branch is proposed to be closed. Silverman said he would hold one hearing in Lake County that would include the proposed closures of Gary and Lowell. No date has been set for the hearing.

"I encourage Gary residents to join me at the hearing and voice their concern to Commissioner Silverman about the hardship this will cause our city's citizens," said Dr. Smith. "In the meantime, I urge residents to write letters to Silverman and call him, so he knows how critical this branch is to Gary.

"Closing it would cause great difficulty for many people, especially senior citizens," added Dr. Smith. "Next year Indiana residents will be forced to have a government photo ID in order to vote. For those Gary seniors, who do not drive, it is going to be even more difficult to get to a branch to obtain the required identification."

